

April 21, 2009

## REGENTS ADVISORY COUNCIL PROPOSES NEW COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF NEW YORK'S LIBRARIES

Citing the dire fiscal struggle of New York's libraries in the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression and evidence that library usage by the people of New York has increased dramatically, the members of the Regents Advisory Council on Libraries have urged the Board of Regents to make state and federal funding for libraries a Regents priority budget and legislative item each and every year.

The Council's 2009 annual report to the Regents, which includes this recommendation and others related to strengthening New York's libraries is now posted on the Council's webpage at:

<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/adviscns/rac/2009rept.htm>

Libraries across the State and the nation are reporting that use has increased by as much as 10-20 percent on average and, in some communities, as much as 50% or more. Norman J. Jacknis, chairperson of the Regents Advisory Council pointed to consistent underfunding that has caused many libraries to dramatically reduce hours, eliminate staff and curtail resources – just when students, the recently unemployed and other residents need them most. According to Mr. Jacknis, the library world is well past "doing more with less" and, at a time when New Yorkers are turning more than ever to them, libraries are being forced into "doing less with less".

The Council reports annually to the Board of Regents on library matters. The 2009 report also highlights the need for all schools in New York State, including elementary schools, to have school libraries and certified professional librarians. Dozens of studies conducted across the county have demonstrated that students with access to a well-stocked school library and a certified school librarian have improved test scores of 10 to 20 percent.

In recognition of the dramatic changes in the library world over the last decade, including the pervasive impact of the Internet, the Council also called upon the Regents to form a new Commission on Library Services to re-examine the future of library services in New York State.

In the spirit of many of the new services already being offered by libraries, the Council suggested that this new commission could handle much of its work virtually. The Council's report also outlines recommendations to the Board of Regents for 2009 budget and legislative priorities for libraries. Please contact Norman J. Jacknis, Chairperson, New York State Regents Advisory Council on Libraries with any questions concerning the Council's 2009 report to the Board of Regents. For more information on the Council, including a roster of council members with contact information, please visit the State Library's website at:

<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/adviscns/rac/index.html>

The Regents Advisory Council on Libraries was established by the New York State Board of Regents on June 5, 1894. The Council advises the Regents regarding library policy, works with State Education Department leaders in developing a comprehensive statewide library and information policy and makes recommendations to the Regents concerning the implementation of the program.